

Article in the Sydney Morning Herald: 22/8/1833

“Piracy”

We have had reported to us the escape of the *Badger*, a Government Colonial vessel, stated to have been entirely manned by convicts-as such a fact would involve a charge which must cost Governor Arthur his commission to govern the Colony any longer, we postpone observation till the enquiry be made. Thus speaks the *Colonial* of last week – the loss of the vessel confirmed by the demi-official journal of Friday last.

It appears she left the Port of Hobart Town on Tuesday week, with provisions for a military station at East Bay Neck, at which place she was seen (by a signalman from Mt Nelson) to pass without putting in the following day, No suspicion of her being taken away till yesterday, when a signalman stationed at Mt Nelson was missing. The master and all her crew are crown prisoners! The Signal-man at Mt Nelson is a person named *George H Darby* who is it said is formally a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy and distinguished himself in the battle of Navirino. Besides this man, the following prisoners are listed as missing. *William Philp*, (formally the master of a merchant vessel), *John Venton*, *Jon Nicolas*, *Isaac Haines* and *Lauglan Macintosh*. The clergyman named *Roberts* who was recently transported to the Colony who it was supposed had been sent to Port Arthur is also gone.

The *Badger* is fitted out for a long voyage, with plenty of provisions, muskets, ammunition and nautical instruments. She is a nearly new vessel, about 25 tons, a good sailor, and newly coppered. She had, it is said, a fair wind out of port; and whatever means have been used by the Government to discover or overtake her, we fear they will prove abortive.

Mt Nelson Primary School - now taking enrolments

The Mt Nelson Primary School are now taking enrolments for Kindergarten in 2012.

If you have a child who turns 4 by December 31st, year you may like to consider enrolling your child at Mt Nelson Primary School. Mt Nelson is a friendly, supportive and accepting school with a real community focus. Pre Kinder sessions have commenced at the Mt Nelson Primary School on Mondays between 2:00 - 3:00, and children in this age group are also invited to enroll in these sessions.

If you have any questions, would like to be shown around the Mt Nelson Primary School or would like to speak to the school regarding your child's enrolment, please contact the school on 6223 2879.

.... and a final word from the Mt Nelson Store.

Greetings once again from the team at the Mount Nelson Store!

This month we are featuring a range of Nabisco products on special in store.

In a Biscuit 175gm range and Ritz 250gm for \$1.99 each

Captains Table Crackers 125gm range for \$1.55 each

Mini Chips Ahoy \$2.49 each

Oreo 150gm Biscuits \$1.50 each

Also, we have the Holland House Almond Fingers Bonus Pack (2 extra fingers) at \$2.99 a pack.

The price of Bananas has finally started to come down. Our current price is \$6.99 Kg.

As the Festive season is quickly approaching, we wish to remind you that our Christmas Order Forms will be available soon . Pre ordering has been very successful over the last 2 Christmas seasons and we strongly suggest completing and returning your order form early.

Until next months issue, Yiassou!

If there is anything you would like the Mt Nelson/Tolmans Hill community to know about, or anything you would like to see included in this newsletter, please Email: margm6@bigpond.com

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Issue 4

Mt Nelson Community Newsletter

200th Anniversary of the Signal Station - Special Edition

The 30th November marks the 200th anniversary of the Mt Nelson Signal Station. This edition of the Mt Nelson Community Newsletter focuses on the history of the signal station, and hopes to raise awareness of the importance of the signal station to Tasmania's history.

To celebrate its anniversary, a program of events will take place at the Signal station from 12:00pm on Wednesday the 30th November. These will include demonstrations of the use of flags, Morse code and the Aldis lamp, performances by The Australian Navy Tasmanian Jazz band, the Tasmanian Police Pipe band, the Australian Navy Drill team, and an address by Lord Mayor Damon Thomas. This event has been organized by the Parks & Wildlife Service, the Signal Station Cafe, Wildcare and with the assistance of the Tasmanian Maritime Museum.

As part of the celebrations for 30 November, Coast Radio Hobart, who maintain the small vessel sea safety radio network in southern Tasmania, will relocate from their office at the Domain to broadcast from the Signal Station. Radio has been an important facet of communication within the reserve. Before transmitters were constructed on top of Mt Wellington, the site was used extensively for radio communication. Experiments in radio occurred as early as 1917, when a test transmission was made from the Signal Station to the Tasman Island light station. Successful experiments in telephony occurred in the 1930's to see if radio could be used for making phone calls across Bass Strait. Radio station 7 HO also had their radio transmitter within in the reserve for at least 25 years, according to a Mercury report, their 500 watt transmitter could on occasion be picked up as far away as Alaska. In 1950, Tasmanian Police used the Signal Station by placing an aerial on top of the wooden signal station mast when they introduced radio cars into law enforcement. The second ship to shore radio base station in Australia was established at Mt Nelson in 1958. Equipment to measure the ionosphere was installed at Mt Nelson in the 1950's, the second place in Tasmania (the first being Macquarie Island) that took regular measurements; the signalman recorded the data as part of their duties.

The ABC outside broadcast van was regularly deployed to the Signal Station to cover the end of the Sydney Hobart Yacht Race as it afforded the best view of the Derwent. These transmissions did not cease until helicopters replaced the lookout in relation to sports coverage. There is still a radio transmitter tower at Mt Nelson and even though the Signal Station was formally closed in 1969, there has never been a period over the last 200 years when signalling in some form has not occurred at the Signal Station. Further details of the program of events for the day can be found at these two web sites:

<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=22609>

<http://www.signalmanscottage.com>

Friends Group for Mt Nelson Signal Station.

As a resident of Mt Nelson, Christian Bell is keen to establish a new Wildcare sub group to assist the Parks & Wildlife Service with the care of the site. There are two volunteer bushcare groups operating at Mt Nelson but their primary focus is the natural environment. The friends group for the Signal Station would focus on historic cultural heritage. The group would assist by undertaking research, with the development of new interpretation and assist with the maintenance of built infrastructure. The group would be seeking grant funding to assist with the upkeep and improvements to the Mt. Nelson Signal Station.

If you would wish to be part of such a group, please contact Christian Bell;

Ph 0427 872670 or email Christian.tas@gmail.com or GPO Box 567, Hobart 7001.

Mt Nelson Signal Station History

The Mt Nelson Signal Station is a sentinel to Hobart, and has played a very important part in its development from a colonial outpost to the present city of today. In recent years the Mt Nelson Signal Station mast flies signal flags from the flagstaff on special occasions and when ships visit Hobart.

The establishment of the Signal Station at Mt Nelson was ordered by General Macquarie in 1811 during his tour of Van Diemen's Land. He specified that the station was to consist of a mast and barracks for a Corporal's Guard. Signalling was to be undertaken by flags. His decision to site Anglesea Barracks where it is was, in part due to the good view it afforded of the Signal Station. A painting circa 1823 shows a two piece mast with a cross spar. Around 1829 a two armed semaphore was established at the station which was replaced in 1831 by a three armed semaphore capable of dealing with 666 code signals. In 1838 the six armed semaphore was introduced which allowed over 900,000 separate signals. By 1860 the Mt Nelson Semaphore had grown into a two tiered structure with the top six arm semaphore dealing with the Port Arthur traffic whilst the lower dealt with the maritime traffic in Hobart.

It was also the site for other advances in communication, with the establishment of an electric telegraph in 1858. On the abandonment of Port Arthur in 1877 the semaphore mast was reduced by the removal of the top half. It was to continue in this form until around the 1880's when the semaphore was removed and a flag staff put in its place. By 1890 the flag staff was already so rotten that its removal was necessitated and sometime before 1892 a two sectioned signal mast was established. This mast seems to have survived until 1933 and does not appear to have had any spars. In 1933 this mast was replaced. In 1950 a new mast was erected with a cross spar and gaff added. This mast survived up to 1997 when its removal was necessitated by decay and was replaced with a similar arrangement, the only difference being that it has just one halyard on the main (rather than two). The mast that you can see today is comparable to the one depicted in the 1823 painting. Improvements in communication technology eventually made the Signal Station redundant ceasing operation in 1969. The Marine Board of Hobart continued to manage the site until 1979; with its appointed caretakers replacing the signallers, the caretakers interestingly enough were still expected to record the arrival of vessels in the Port of Hobart. The Marine Boards control of the site had lasted 121 years with the surrender of the lease of the site to the Tasmanian Government in 1979.

Since then the Government, through the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) has been actively managing the site as a tourist destination affording a panoramic view of the River Derwent and surrounding area – the main factor for the establishment of the Signal Station at Mount Nelson.

Apart from the history of the Signal Station the views alone are worth a visit to this spectacular site. The interpretation display is open daily and outlines the historical role and function of the Signal Station, including displays of reproductions of old photographs, various artefacts and description captions explaining the various communication methods used during the 158 years of the station's operation.

The interpretation panels at the signal station include panoramic photograph of the view from the Signal Station mounted in an arc under the lookout windows in the Signal Station. Selected names of places and features are identified on the photograph to enable visitors to orientate themselves. The image also provides a sense of the vista at times when clouds obscure the view.

Other interpretation includes a panel showing the 'Semaphore System from 1839 to 1870' which consists of the locations of the semaphores shown on a reproduced 3D style map of south eastern Tasmania hand drawn by an early surveyor. Two exquisite copies of the works of artist Edward Murphy (1823 – 1871) depicting signal flags and ships of the day. The copies were made possible through the State Library of Tasmania, one from the W.L.Crowther Collection and the other from the Allport Collection and are thankfully acknowledged.

An Ericsson telephone has also been acquired, refurbished and installed, replacing the original 1895 model stolen from the Signal Station some years ago.

At the adjacent flagstaff, interpretation relating to the history of communication at the site and how it has changed over time from flags to a variety of semaphore configurations back to flagstaff has been provided. When the coded signal flags are flown, an additional panel about 'Flag Signalling' and how the coded message displayed by the flags is defined by the International Code of Signals (1931 revision) which is displayed.

(This item has been abridged and amended by Christian Bell from the original PWS interpretation information sheet for the Signal Station (out of print). It is expected that a new version of this information sheet will shortly be reissued by PWS.)

The Long and Winding Road The Mt Nelson Signal Station in World Wars 1 & 2

Transport to the Mt Nelson Signal Station has at times proved problematic. The Signal Station Reserve was originally as much as 250 acres, however over time the land was subdivided. The original road went more or less straight down to Sandy Bay. The access road was cut by new subdivisions and traffic to the Signal Station had to be negotiated with the landholders by the Hobart Marine Board. One farmer even ploughed up the track infuriating the signalmen. Visitors often felt they were trespassing if visiting the Signal Station via this route and it was of course a very steep track. The top gate of the present fire trail marks the entry point of this track (between 683 & 685 Nelson Rd).

Early in the 20th century a reader of the Mercury (in a letter to the editor) proposed that a new route to the Signal Station should be undertaken by building a road from Proctors Rd along the top of the ridge of Mt Nelson to the Signal Station, a very practical and sensible option that was however not taken up at the time.

Agitation by the Tourist Association led to the building of a new road, Nelson Rd (the famous bends) in 1910. The road seems to have been designed to afford a great view of the river with its many turns. The large number of switch backs might have been gentler for horse drawn vehicles but you would think the motor vehicle era had well and truly dawned. It certainly not the most direct route to the Signal Station, (the current main fire trail on Mt Nelson would have been a more direct option). Nelson Road, just near the top of the ridge veered to the left and became what is now called Rialannah Rd.

In 1938, the car park and loop road were built within the Signal Station grounds to provide for booming tourism based on the motor car.

In 1958, the Marine Board of Hobart added a new extension to Nelson Road, just near where the present tavern is (bypassing Rialannah Rd), this time following the top of the ridge as well as constructing Olinda Grove finally connecting up Proctors Rd and a new route the Signal Station was created (fulfilling the earlier Mercury reader's proposal for this route).

Mt Nelson was briefly designated the Australian Navy Port War Signal Station (Station 221, Hobart). It operated at the Mt Nelson Signal Station for a short period in 1939 before relocating to the purpose built facilities at Fort Direction and at Point Pierson. However a naval detachment remained at the Signal Station at Mt Nelson. An iron shed was built on the site. Keith Kennedy-Tyson interviewed L.J Cross, who stated that the detachment was commanded by a Lieutenant Crookshank and at times consisted of between 20 and 40 men. The Station was closed to the public. The site was full guarded with appropriate challenges etc. On one occasion a painter was taken away for questioning, and another (a photographer) was questioned by police.

The supervision was quite intense; an item within the existing interpretation at the Signal Station stated that the signalman could not leave their post at the lookout at night without being escorted to the toilets located at their own houses. Some of the most important troop ships that operated during the war such as the converted passenger liners the Queen Mary 1 and the Queen Elizabeth 1 visited the Derwent and the movements of these ships would have been treated as highly confidential.

In the First World War, the Mt Nelson Signal Station acted as the Port War Signal Station. The telephone line was extended between the Signal Station and Fort Nelson in 1914. Some of the iron poles that supported the telephone line still remain (made by Siemens, a German company). The public was again excluded from visiting the Signal Station. Yeoman Duffy was for six months the Petty Officer in charge of the Port War Signal Station further extending the Duffy family involvement with the Signal Station.

Fort Nelson (Porters Hill) was the main WW1 coastal defence battery on the Derwent. It had two six inch guns. In 1909, trees were cleared at the western end of the Signal Station Reserve to afford a good view of the Mt Nelson signal mast (so it could easily be viewed from Fort Nelson) in order to facilitate communications. Work on the building of Fort Nelson first commenced in 1907.